

Why India is destination for medical treatment

SEVERAL UGANDANS HAVE HAD TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE ABROAD FOR CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE SPECIALISED TREATMENT FOR WHICH UGANDA LACKS TECHNICAL EXPERTISE OR HAVE LIMITED TECHNOLOGY. OTHERS DO SO BECAUSE THEY LACK CONFIDENCE IN OUR SERVICES AND WANT A SECOND OPINION, WRITES LILLIAN N. MAGEZI

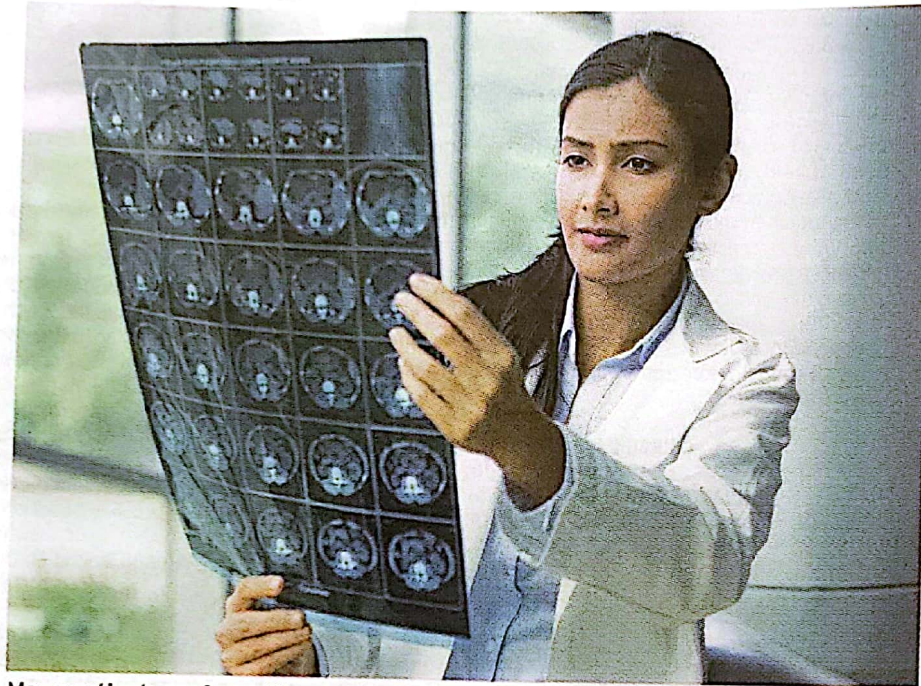
Grace Kiwanuka, the executive director of the Uganda Healthcare Federation, notes that about 500,000 Ugandans seek medical care abroad annually.

Most of the patients who go abroad include those seeking second opinions after no diagnosis has been done on them. For others, it is after they do not notice improvement with the treatment given.

These are followed by those seeking sensitive surgeries where specialised treatment is required. For example, heart, spine or brain surgery.

Then there are those with cancers of various kinds, mainly where organs are failing or damaged.

India is the leading destination for Ugandans seeking healthcare abroad, notes Kiwanuka, adding that more than half of the 500,000 Ugandans who seek care abroad



Many patients prefer getting treatment from India for complicated cases such as brain surgery. This is because India is equipped with the manpower and technology

because India's healthcare is ranked among one of the most trusted, cheap and patients are offered excellent services, says Kiwanuka. According to 'Patients Beyond Borders',

an online platform tracking medical tourism trends globally, the affordable and inexpensive cost of medical care services, about 30% to 70% lower than the costs in the US, make

health tourism to India highly appealing to overseas patients. Kiwanuka explains that overall service standard perceptions are determined by the quality of care, bedside

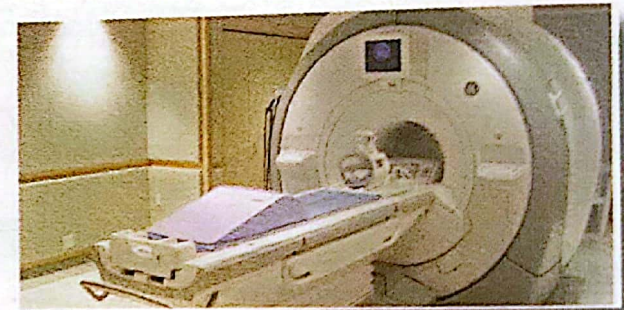
A GLANCE

- Cheap services
- Cheap travel
- Organised sector of medical tourism

the manner of the healthcare professionals and whether the care is delivered in a patient-centered manner. She adds that in all these areas, India is rated highly by Ugandan patients.

MEDICAL TOURISM

The medical tourism sector in India is highly developed with over 100 medical tourism agencies that help patients from abroad travel to India and



An MRI scan machine used to check inside the body

access health services, explains Mihir Vora, the founder and chief executive officer of Magnus MediTourism, a medical tourism agency.

Vora adds that many of these companies have agencies in different countries that link them to patients.

DISCOUNT TRAVEL FARE

The medical tourism agencies have partnered with a regional airline which gives patients going to India on a medical visa and their caregivers a discount rate. The airline company entered into partnership with a medical tourism company after it was noted that the cost of air tickets contribute greatly to the cost patients incur to get care abroad.

The discount on travel makes it relatively cheap for patients to seek medical care in India.

REGULAR MEDICAL CAMPS

In addition, through their agents, Indian hospitals regularly hold medical camps in Uganda, where patients are examined and referred to India for treatment.